

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Case File No.: AA-81909 (2860)

EA No.: AK-040-99-043

Type of Action: Communications Right-of-way
Bristol Bay Cellular Partnership

Location: T. 14 S., R. 41 W., Section 33, E½NE¼; and Section 34, W½NW¼,
Seward Meridian

Applicant: Bristol Bay Cellular Partnership
P. O. Box 456
King Salmon, Alaska 99613

Prepared By: Kathy Stubbs, Realty Specialist

Preparing
Office: Bureau of Land Management
Anchorage Field Office
6881 Abbott Loop Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Date: October 26, 1999

I. INTRODUCTION:

Bristol Bay Cellular Partnership filed an application for a communication site right-of-way (R-O-W) on August 2, 1999. A Telecommunication Microwave Relay site was determined to be needed midway between King Salmon, Alaska and Igiugig, Alaska. BLM was previously contacted by the Lake and Peninsula Borough School District about their interest and support of a microwave site being established between King Salmon and Igiugig. They are interested in receiving high speed Internet access service to village schools within their school district. In addition, the entire community will benefit from increased data transmission.

The R-O-W will be for a period of 25 years, with the right to renew, pursuant to Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and 43 CFR 2800. Under 43 CFR 2801.1-1(i), "each grant issued for a term of 20 years or more shall contain a provision requiring periodic review of the grant at the end of the twentieth year and at regular intervals thereafter not to exceed 10 years".

A. Need for the Proposed Action:

The telecommunication microwave relay site is needed to facilitate high speed Internet access within the school district and to the village clinics between King Salmon, Levelock and Igiugig. In addition, the relay facility will have a maximum capability to transport eight (8) digital T-1 trunks from Igiugig and Levelock to the 8-Mile Site in King Salmon. This would benefit the entire community by increasing the speed of data transmission. The proposed site location is midway between Levelock and Igiugig. The location of the proposed communication site has been analyzed as the most direct communication link.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

No land use plan exists for this area. However, the environmental analysis assesses the impacts of the Proposed Action and provides a basis for a decision on the proposal (43 CFR 1610.8 (b)(1)).

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

A. Proposed Action:

The Bristol Bay Cellular Partnership is proposing to construct, maintain and operate a Telecommunication Microwave Relay site. The Proposed Action is to place, by helicopter, on top of a rocky knoll the following: one prefabricated fiberglass building (12' x 12' x 9' high), a 30' communication antenna tower and guide wires, a 100-gallon propane tank, three (10' in diameter grid style) microwave dishes, twelve 50-watt solar panels, a 2500 Watt generator and power tools. There are no existing access routes to the proposed site and no new roads will be constructed. The tower will support the three (10' in diameter grid style) microwave dishes and twelve 50-watt solar panels. Construction is planned for July 2000 and is estimated to last two weeks. The requested term of the right-of-

way is 25 years. No heavy equipment will be used on site for construction. A hand operated gas driven drill/hammer will be used to set guy anchors. Power for the hand tools, such as, drills and saws, will be provided by a 2500 Watt generator. The land description of the proposed site is:

Seward Meridian
T. 14 S., R. 41 W.
Section 33, E½, NE¼
Section 34, W½NW¼

The area of the site contains .23 acres of public land.

- B. No Action Alternative:
Under the No Action Alternative, BLM will continue to implement current management practices until another proposed action is designed.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT:

- A. General Setting:
The lands included in this R-O-W application are situated on top of a flat, rocky knoll with lichen vegetation, blue berries and shallow soils.
- B. Critical Elements:
The following critical elements of the human environment have been analyzed and are either not present or will not be affected by the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative:
- Air Quality
 - Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
 - Cultural Resources
 - Environmental Justice
 - Farmlands (Prime or Unique)
 - Floodplains
 - Invasive, Non-native Species
 - Native American Religious Concerns
 - Subsistence
 - Threatened and Endangered Species
 - Wastes (Hazardous/Solid)
 - Water Quality (Surface/Ground)
 - Wetlands/Riparian Zones
 - Wild and Scenic Rivers
 - Wilderness

1. ANILCA Section 810 Clearance:
The Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative were analyzed. It was determined that no ANILCA, Section 810 compliance or clearance evaluation is required. The lands are validly State selected and are not public lands as defined under ANILCA. The subsistence report dated August 23, 1999, is located in case file AA-81909.
2. Cultural Section 106 Clearance:
The Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative were analyzed under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. No cultural resources are known or expected for the area. The standard ROW stipulation concerning discovery of unanticipated cultural resources has been included. The cultural resources report dated August 26, 1999, is located in case file AA-81909.
3. Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species Clearance:
The Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative were evaluated in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. They were determined to have no significant effect on threatened and endangered plants and animals and their habitats. No consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is necessary pursuant to Section 7 of the Act. The T&E report dated August 19, 1999, is in case file AA-81909.
4. Wastes, Hazardous/Solid:
The Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative were evaluated. It was determined all waste materials must be removed from the site as they are generated. Any hazardous material spills (including petroleum products) must be remediated in accordance with current Federal and State regulations.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

- A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:
The area will be minimally impacted by the construction, operation and maintenance of the communication site. Anchors for the guide wires and anchors for the fiberglass shelter shall be drilled into rock surface. The communication antenna tower rises to 30 feet which means the microwave dishes and solar panels will be seen for many miles. The prefabricated building will not be as obvious as the microwave dishes.

Since access to the site will be by helicopter, human use at the site will be minimal.

- B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:
Under the No Action Alternative, no disturbance will occur.
- C. Mitigation Measures:
There are no mitigation measures.
- D. Residual or Cumulative Impacts:
The visual intrusion would remain.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION:

- A. List of Preparers:
Donna Redding, Archaeologist
Bruce Seppi, Wildlife Biologist
Jeff Denton, Wildlife Biologist
Debbie Blank, Botanist
Jake Schlapfer, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Kathy Stubbs, Realty Specialist